



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Lords Grand Committee Debate

#### **Inclusive Society**

*col 138GC Lord Dobbs (Conservative):* ... I want to start with the Sewell report, which was long in preparation and deep in analysis. It concluded that, although of course there is still much we need to do, we are more tolerant and inclusive than some pretend. Yet even before the ink was dry, let alone read, the professional intolerants—the muck-spreaders—piled in to demean and diminish both the report and its excellent authors.

Everywhere that decent democratic people gather, the extremists try to infiltrate: the Black Lives Matter movement; Extinction Rebellion; our schools and universities; even our vaccination programme. The militants and wreckers—for that is what they are—are the real racists. They are the ones who try to divide, not include. They do not care about the facts. They simply insist on their truth, supported by nothing but their ignorance and opportunism. How long before our vaccination programme is accused of being institutionally racist? Forgive me: of course, it already is.

This country is changing. It is getting better. It is growing more tolerant and more inclusive. ... Is there more to do? Always, but work is in progress—and what progress since the days when ignorant racial commentary was used wholesale in our pubs, playgrounds and places of work. We were not being wicked; we simply did not know any better. Now we do. ... This is a tolerant country. This is a compassionate country. During the past 15 years, 9 million immigrants have come here. They did not come here because they believed that they would be attacked, abused and tormented; that is what they were fleeing from. ...

*col 139GC The Lord Bishop of Gloucester:* ... there is the role of churches and other faith communities. They have certainly not been the sole distributors of hope in this crisis, but as well as chaplains in places such as hospitals and prisons, people supporting the dying and conducting funerals, there have been many worshiping communities, Christian and of other faiths, co-ordinating and accommodating community initiatives and continuing to create social capital, and indeed spiritual capital, which will be much needed as we emerge into the next season. How can central and local government help and not hinder these connections? ...

**col 143GC Baroness Royall of Blaisdon:** ... I hope that Covid has made us as a society re-evaluate our priorities and made us value people for what they contribute to society rather than for what they earn. ...

**col 144GC** As Michael Marmot has said: “There is now an urgent need to do things differently. We must build a society based on the principles of social justice; reduce inequalities of income and wealth; and build a wellbeing economy that puts achievement of health and wellbeing, rather than narrow economic goals, at the heart of government strategy.” ...

**col 155GC Lord Farmer (Conservative):** ... I will focus ... on the report from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. ...

I was disappointed by the shrill, vituperative inaccuracies of many of the criticisms of this report. They contrast starkly with the calm, nuanced and reasoned tone of its conclusions. At the heart of the controversy are different expectations as to what will drive change and improve outcomes for the disadvantaged and excluded. As the BBC reported: “While the Left ‘emoted’ on race, the prime minister wanted a data-driven report” which recognised the complexities driving disadvantage, and for the commission to make practical recommendations.

The Cabinet Office’s Race Disparity Unit, set up in 2016, built a comprehensive database on race and ethnicity which the commission is the first major independent body to use to investigate how ethnicity and other factors impact on outcomes and deeper underlying causes of key disparities. Surely it would be more surprising if access to this rich new seam had not generated new insights and a more productive narrative. Ideology cannot be allowed to negate these, as Trevor Phillips explained in the *Times*:

“Depressingly, a minority want the debate about race to continue as a medieval contest of faith, in which the catechism—‘institutional racism’, ‘white privilege’—is mouthed unthinkingly, without understanding. Those who deviate are lashed as heretics ... it is the self-proclaimed radicals who are, in fact, least keen on change. For the zealots to justify their revolutionary aims ... ethnic minorities must remain in suffering.”

Specifically, this report’s data-driven conclusion was that family structure contributes more than racism to outcomes. One commissioner described the key moment in the whole process as when all 10 said, with one voice, that family was what distinguished the success stories from the failures. ...

**col 184GC Baroness Wilcox of Newport:** ... the pandemic has also made it all too clear that we live in an unequal society. As my noble friend Lady Chakrabarti said, it has been a magnifier of every inequality and injustice. The IFS estimates that, during the pandemic, black Caribbean deaths are 1.8 times those of white British; Pakistani deaths are 2.7 times as high; and black African fatalities three times higher. The same study also found that Bangladeshi men are four times more likely than their white counterparts to have jobs in industries which have been closed. On top of this, research by the BMA revealed that almost double the proportion of BAME doctors have felt pressurised to work in settings with insufficient PPE, compared with their white counterparts. The comments made earlier by the noble Lord, Lord Farmer, referring to Trevor Phillips were somewhat partial when talking about racism and racial inequalities. The point Trevor Phillips made was that racial inequalities are a feature of UK society, but they are being exploited in different ways by people with extreme views and those wishing to exacerbate cultural divisions in society.

**col 186GC** As the United Kingdom exits from the pandemic, we have an opportunity to ask ourselves who we want to be as a country. We cannot afford to rebuild Britain on the same foundations of inequality which have left so many people vulnerable. We must instead build a more inclusive society, reflecting our values as a country. ...

**col 188GC The Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Greenhalgh):** ... The pandemic has shone a light on our society. It has shown us where we are strong, where communities have come together

and where national and local government have stepped in together to great effect. However, it has also demonstrated areas of concern. There has been an increase in loneliness and isolation among many. Some communities have been more affected than others during this pandemic, and latent inequalities have come to the fore. The Government are aware and are taking action. From this devastating virus we can see that there is an opportunity to forge an even more inclusive society. ...

As a Government, we are committed to ensuring that Britain is a fairer society. We will tackle racial and ethnic inequalities where they exist. That is why we established an independent commission on race and ethnic disparities to explore these issues. ... It goes further to understand why disparities exist, what works and what does not and has presented 24 recommendations for action across government and other public bodies. It is now time for the Government to consider the commission's independent recommendations in detail and assess the implications for future government policy ...

*col 189GC* ... creating the conditions where people are given equal access to opportunity is a fundamental part of the Government's vision for an inclusive society. We have therefore created an integrated, joined-up Equality Hub in the Cabinet Office ... The hub will have a key role in driving government priorities on equality and opportunity. It has a particular focus on improving the quality of evidence and data about disparities and the types of barriers that different people face. ...

*col 192GC* I agree with the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester on the importance of our faith communities. We cannot expect to make progress on fostering an inclusive society without them. They represent fundamental pillars of civil society engagement. Throughout the pandemic, faith communities and places of worship have provided solace to many people, not only for spiritual well-being but also by offering a multitude of support services, often in partnership with local authorities. These are collaborative efforts that I want to see continue in the post-pandemic landscape. ...

*col 193GC* Unfortunately, we know that hate crime continues to undermine efforts across the United Kingdom to make our country a prosperous and inclusive place to live. The latest figures show that hate crimes are increasing. There is an upward trend in these figures, partly fuelled by people's confidence to step forward to report these crimes. I am appalled at the attacks that Chinese and east and south-east Asian communities have endured during the pandemic. ... I could not be more adamant that all forms of hatred, including that based on race, are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We have one of the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to protect communities from hostility, violence and bigotry and deal with the perpetrators of hate crime. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-14/debates/EC4F982D-1562-462B-9454-C03651940A6D/InclusiveSociety>

*The Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974507/20210331 - CRED Report - FINAL - Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

*The Times article referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/silence-of-white-establishment-betrays-sewell-r9g80h8xg>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Religious Freedom

**Jim Shannon (DUP)** [175847] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the report published in 2020 by the APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief entitled Commentary on the current state of freedom of religion or belief.

**Nigel Adams:** We have taken note of the APPG's recently published report. The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all, and to promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. We remain deeply concerned about violations and abuses of FoRB in many parts of the world. Where we have concerns, we raise them directly with governments, including at ministerial level. The Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, underlined the UK's commitment to FoRB for all in a number of international meetings in November 2020, speaking at the Ministerial to Advance Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Ministers' Forum of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance.

On 20 December 2020, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his commitment to FoRB by appointing Fiona Bruce, MP for Congleton, as his Special Envoy for FoRB. Mrs Bruce works with ministers, officials, and others to deliver the Government's goal of seeing everyone, everywhere able to have and practise a faith, belief, or no religious belief, in accordance with their conscience. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon works alongside her to drive forward the implementation of the recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's report on FCDO support for persecuted Christians in a way that improves the lives of those persecuted for their faith, or belief, or for not holding a religion.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175847>

*The APPG report referred to above can be read at*

<https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/2019-Commentary-on-State-of-FORB.pdf>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2622>

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

#### **\*\* Domestic Abuse Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2709>

Ministerial Statement

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-04-14/debates/21041449000011/DomesticAbuseBill>

## **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

## **Freedom of Speech (Universities) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2820>

## **Genocide Determination Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

## **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

## **Marriage (Approved Organisations) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

## **Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

## **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

### **Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19**

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438